



The Tripper Report for September - December 2009 (updated 6/12/2013)

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Coast of Maine September 6th to September 18th

Ride Director: Tom Leever, Report by: Terry Bunton



If you like seafood, a nautical theme and the challenge of many easy hills, and a few not so easy ones, then this is the tour for you. The ride was well planned with very good maps and cue sheets, and although we rode on minor roads the navigation was generally very straightforward. There were a few sections where we traveled for a few miles on major roads, here the traffic was in sharp contrast to the lightly traveled quiet minor roads. The only down side to these minor roads was that they were in poor repair and somewhat rough in places. With this in mind, pre-ride notes had advised the use of 28c tires, but I rode on 25c, as the clearance on my bike will not permit a fatter tire. While this caused no great difficulty I think a wider tire would be the way to go if you have a choice. On most days there were points along the route where one could opt to take a short cut.

Also our leaders provided the opportunity to shuttle in the support vehicle for a few miles at the start of the day, to reduce the distance, if needed.

The accommodations were of a high standard, staying mostly in traditional period inns. My favorite was probably the "Whitehall Inn" in Camden, where we stayed two nights. On this rest day in Camden a number of us took a sailing excursion on "Olad" a restored 57' schooner that was built in 1927. Aboard "Olad" we helped in raising the sails and I took a turn at the wheel. In keeping with the nautical theme, a few days later we had the opportunity to go ocean kayaking at the end of our days ride near Brooklin.

"Wooden Boat" magazine and its boat building school also makes it home nearby, and the following morning we watched classes in session learning the fine art of wooden boat construction. While down by the water a number of schooners were lying at anchor, some raising sail and readying for their departure.

No tour in Maine would be complete without a visit to one of the many lighthouses that abound here. While most could only be viewed from a distance a few could be easily reached from our route. I particularly enjoyed a visit to the Grindle Point lighthouse that was on our route on the island of Islesboro. This lighthouse can be entered from the adjacent Sailor's Museum and one can climb the tower to the light itself.

Food, the fuel for cyclists, is an important and enjoyable part of any tour. We started each day with breakfast provided by our Hotel or Inn. Lunch and snacks were on our own along the route. With the rural nature of Maine and the quiet back roads that we traveled, the availability of cafes was limited. There were a few country stores along the route, and near the larger towns a café could generally be found for lunch. Evening meals were either prearranged group meals, or visits on our own, to local restaurants where we could enjoy a good selection of seafood.

Our final day of riding was in Acadia National Park, for me it was one of the high points of the trip. The roads here were in excellent repair and the climb up Mt Cadillac was not difficult. We also rode a few miles on the famous carriage trails, which although unpaved were, with care, quite rideable.

Participants: Jack Dysart, Martin Siegel, Tom Leever, Rickey Davis, Terry Bunton, Janet Freeman, Carole Milligan, Cathy Cloutier, Scott McKay, Gail Eden, Don Eden, Julie Leever, John Leever, Gerry Jennings, Charles Jennings, Richard Spinetto, David Ziegler, Carol Hermes, Hank Hermes, Stephen Diamond, Suzanne Petke, Stephen Petke, Michael Swearingen

Nova Scotia: Cape Breton and the Cabot Trail September 7th to September 19th

Ride Director: Wilson Cooper, Report by: Ida Nystrom



Cycling the Cabot Trail is the stuff of legend, and rightly so. It was the "Big Draw" that called us all to sign up. What was perhaps surprising to many of the ride participants was the low- key loveliness and seaside scenery of the other parts of the trip. This ride circumnavigated almost all of Cape Breton Island and traveled many of its designated scenic highways. The route was truly multi-cultural, traversing both the Celtic and the Acadian cultures.

The ride began in the west along the Ceilidh Trail, the Island's music center, and moved inland through the famous Margaree Valley salmon fishing areas before heading up and over the mountains to Cape North, perhaps the very spot where John Cabot stepped ashore. The return ride along the eastern shore took us to the famous Keltic Lodge

(plan ahead – gentlemen must wear a collar to dinner), Great Bras d'Or Lake and the scenic and culturally French Isle Madame. Among the many highlights of the trip were the overnight stop at Glenora, the only North America Single Malt Whiskey Distillery (tours and samples available) and the Alexander Graham Bell National Historical Park in Baddeck.

Daily riding distances varied from 35 to 55 miles, with a few very steep hills. Due to the season traffic was light and seldom a problem. Road surfaces varied from excellent to bone jarring. It was occasionally necessary to carry your lunch as many food options had closed for the season.

Lodging ranged from extreme high-end to basic. All were clean and comfortable. The food choices were a fish lover's delight, but the meat eaters were also quite satisfied. Most evenings featured local musicians at dinner. All hotels offered free internet service.

Photo by Paul Braithwaite on the Cabot Trail.

Participants: Barb Larsen, Leo Riegel, Sue Cooper, Wilson Cooper, Ida Nystrom, Jim Nystrom, James Hunt, Susan Hunt, Monnie Parker, Glenn Addleman, Paul Braithwaite, Susan Pacey, Charles Haraway, Carol Haraway

Wisconsin Shorelines 2009 September 8th to September 14th
Ride Director: Deborah Jansen, Report by: Darlene Dunbar



What a wonderful Fall ride for any confirmed cyclist who wants to kick back and take a trip with a slower pace leaving daylight hours for exploring on foot, any beginning cyclist, or a couple with differing degrees of cycling ability. This five day, semi-fixed base ride fit the bill for our group of 20 cyclists beginning with one night at the door to Door County, Wisconsin, in Sturgeon Bay's Stone Harbor Inn, then bicycling up the coast for three nights to the Birchwood Lodge in Sister Bay, then returning to Stone Harbor for two more nights. Our trip leaders planned out average daily mileage routes of 41 miles, creating alternate routes with less mileage and the longest alternate at 53.6 miles. The planned routes put us on good quality back country roads with clean shoulders at least 36" wide and very little bicycling time on the two main state routes that cover the peninsula, Rt. 42

and Rt. 57. An additional benefit during our week-no one on the trip encountered any barking dogs! The actual trip matched its description with a mostly flat terrain with a few rolling hills and the countryside a rewarding mix of farmland, lakes, small towns and state and county parks to explore. No entrance fees for the county parks! The trip leaders did their planning homework and also brought the group together every night for hors d'oeuvres, plentiful and filling all the necessary food groups so that it could have served as supper! Deb and Virgil were a flexible, no pressure, engaging husband and wife team who provided each of us with a folder filled with a variety of needed maps, cue sheets, planned and alternate road trips, guidance on restaurants, parks, museums and other points of interest including a night of theater at the Peninsula Players in their new stage house and audience pavilion between Fish Creek and Egg Harbor off Highway 42. Door County offered historic, non-touristy towns to explore with wonderful names like Algoma, Egg Harbor, Gill's Rock, Bailey's Harbor, wineries, bakeries and a wide variety of restaurants to fit differing price ranges and types of food, ranging from simple, diner food to three or four star dining. Check out the Shipwrecked Brewery in Egg Harbor, Julie's Restaurant in Fish Creek, the DC Deli for a quick sandwich and the Inn at the Cedars for three star dining both in Sturgeon Bay, ice cream at Wilson's in Ephraim, Sweetie Pies south of Fish Creek and if you can find it, the Coyote Restaurant outside of Bailey's Harbor for barbequed baby-backed ribs and great salads and sandwiches. Or make yourself a picnic like we did and take your bike on the Island Clipper ferry to Washington Island and join Nelson's "Bitter's Club" and get your official t-shirt. We heard the required shot of bitters goes down easier with a beer! Also on Washington Island ask a local how to find the replica of a local Viking church and Jens Jacobsen's Museum, both restored to their original appearance and well worth a visit. And in Sister Bay you can't miss Al Johnson's offering authentic Swedish breakfast, lunch and dinner including live goats munching off the grass landscaped roof! Our feelings about the five day trip may also have been influenced by the weather, six sunny days in a row, as well as the best daily group Social Hour! And don't return home without some Wisconsin dried cherries and Wisconsin cheese curds with the special batter to deep fry them!

Participants: Virgil Jansen, Deborah Jansen, George McCormick, Nancy Mc Connell, Connie Obelnicki, Frank Obelnicki, Ralph Neidhardt, Dixie Neidhardt, William Mc Connell, Mary Travis, Carol Bozena, Darlene Dunbar, John Muth, Mary Muth, Jacque Austin, Stephen Mangold, Alan Travis, Robert Howard, Mary Howard, Alvena McCormick, Anne Brown, Rick Brown

Nova Scotia: South Shore, Kejimikujik, & Annapolis Valley September 19th to October 1st

Ride Director: Wilson Cooper, Report by: Susan Barlocher



We started out in Halifax, a friendly and laid-back port city with a slightly European feel. Those of us who had an extra day or two could take in the sights: the Citadel (the 19th century British fortress, which was cold and windy, but had great views of the city), the Public Gardens, and the waterfront. Halifax is also the home of several universities, which has a strong effect on the city's eclectic culture.

From there we headed southwest to Peggy's Cove and its famous lighthouse, huge boulders, and a lone bagpipe player. The Swissair Flight 111 memorial lay just beyond (we passed by the second memorial and victim internment site, even more beautiful and somber than the first, the next day). We spent the first night in four star "cottages" in Hubbards Cove.

For the next few days, we continued along the South Shore around the Aspotogan Peninsula and through Chester, Mahone Bay, and many other picturesque and charming seaside villages. We spent two nights in the town of Lunenburg, a UNESCO-designated heritage site. It had colorful and quirky architecture, excellent seafood restaurants, and a long and illustrious maritime history. Particularly fascinating was the Fisheries Museum and its depictions of early fishing life. One of the day rides led to Blue Rocks, a tranquil fishing village protected by slate rocks that looked breathtaking in the late afternoon sun. We stayed in the Boscawen Inn, a Victorian mansion with a game parlor where our extremely competitive van driver enjoyed beating everyone at checkers.

We continued west to Liverpool, then went north to Kijimkujik National Park. We stayed on the Mersey River with canoes at our disposal. Sadly, no one got to use them because it rained hard for much of the day. Five riders were offered a lift by a kind local with a pickup truck (none of us met anyone in Nova Scotia who wasn't genuinely friendly or eager to help). Those of us who braved the rain appreciated the wood burning stoves in each of the cabins and the spaghetti dinner that followed.

We then rode north to Annapolis Royal, the site of the Canada's oldest European settlement. We visited Port Royal, a reconstruction of the French explorer Samuel de Champlain's 1605 "Habitation" and the Annapolis Tidal Generating Station, the only tidal power plant in the Western hemisphere.

On the last leg of our trip, we rode east through the farms and apple orchards of Annapolis Valley to Kingston and Wolfville. Those of us who climbed North Mountain were rewarded with views of the Bay of Fundy (and an even more grueling climb back over the mountain). We had two days in Wolfville to ride along the dykes built by the French settlers (Acadians) to hold back the Midas Basin, which has the highest tides in the world, and to visit the Grand PrA© National Historic Site, which commemorated the deportation of the Acadians from Nova Scotia by the British.

We had our final dinner at our inn in Wolfville and returned to Halifax by bus the next day.

A note about the tour and its leaders, Wilson and Sue Cooper: the tour was extremely well planned and executed, the cue sheets unfailingly accurate (even those of us who failed to set our computers to kilometer mode did not get lost), the leaders well versed in the history and attractions of the towns we visited, and the inns comfortable and interesting. Most importantly, the tour participants, all more experience travelers than this writer, were the most congenial and supportive people she has had the privilege of riding with.

Participants: Sue Cooper, Wilson Cooper, Lucy Glover, Randy Glover, Wes Johnson, Erika Weaver, Rod Harmon, Jill Linsk, Rod Neathery, Joann DeVries, John DeVries, Susie Stogsdill, Stogs Stogsdill, Arleen Sakamoto, Susan Barlocher, Teresa Shaffer

Fall 2009 Tour of Quebec September 19th to October 3rd
Ride Director: Judy McCarroll, Report by: Sara Blakeslee



What a unique experience to cycle the Route Verte in Quebec province during the height of fall colors! In Quebec our group of 21 hardy cyclists experienced French culture, food and language. We dubbed Quebec "a country within a country" ...kind of a local, inexpensive France.

But Quebec is much more than a place where French-speaking locals roll their eyes at English speaking tourists. It is the home of the Route Verte and the magnificent waterways of the St Lawrence. We pedaled primarily on the Route Verte, a 4000-kilometer cycling network of routes, paths and lanes that traverse Quebec province. Our route from Quebec City into the rural countryside and back to Quebec City was defined by the waters of Québec; the St Lawrence River/Seaway, the Saguenay Fjord,

and Lake St Jean. Our route was continually on the water (ferry crossings, whale watching boats or kayaks) or spinning along a watercourse (river, seaway, fjord or lake).

The tour started in beautiful Quebec City where we enjoyed a city tour on cycles with a local guide. This was the first on many highlights to come. For two days we cruised down the St. Lawrence River with an awesome tailwind over flat terrain. Oh those heady first days were charmed! When we crossed the St Lawrence at Riviere-Du-Loup the river had become a seaway requiring a 90-minute ferry ride. Along the north side of the St Lawrence River, we pedaled to the quaint town of Tadoussac where we had time for a whale-watching excursion. It was a thrill to see fin whales, minke whales, and the beautiful white belugas, as well as hearing the French tourists exclaim, Ooh, La La! Ooh La La!

Next we cycled up the Saguenay Fjord through rural countryside to St Gideon on Lake St Jean. Along the way we stayed in delightful villages, like the charming Saint Rose du Nord tucked into the hillside along the fjord. Pedaling through this sparsely populated countryside with the trees ablaze with color, we were on alert for moose! We spent 2 days at a lakeside resort on Lake St Jean before heading back to Quebec via a hilly route (think 15 mile hill!). On the way, we stayed two nights at the adorable Auberge des Cevennes in L'Anse St Jean. Here we kayaked in the Saguenay Fjord for an on-the-water view of the magnificent surroundings.

Our luck with the weather gods finally ran out toward the end of the tour, and we endured several wet and foggy riding days. Although we got soaked, our spirits were not dampened. After a hot shower at a lovely auberge and a restorative beverage, we were in fine fiddle for happy hour and dinner. We all felt lucky to be among such a fine and fun group of BAC cyclists. We all felt lucky to have awesome leaders, Judy and Ralph McCarroll, who did such a fantastic job of planning and executing the tour. Their attention to detail and above and beyond efforts were appreciated by all. Even the days of foul weather could not dampen our delight and enjoyment on the Tour of Quebec Fall 2009.

Participants: Judith young, Philip Sanderman, Ralph McCarroll, Judy McCarroll, Bruce Frye, Julie Tilden, Marilyn Williams, Karen Sanderman, Barbara Stiltner, Bo Newsom, Sara Blakeslee, Janet Freeman, Richard Spinetto, Claire Buhl, John Blakeslee, Sandra Franzen, Alma Worthington, Jan Erickson, Jim Erickson, Ron Kovanic, Ina Tornallyay

Vermont Peak September 26th to October 7th

Ride Director: Tom Leever, Report by: Pamela McCarter



We were seventeen strangers looking for adventure and for an early glimpse of the famous New England colors of fall. Seven of us were Californians, positively thirsting for a glimpse of autumn. When there was a break in the rain and mist, we found in Vermont a splendid display of brilliant color. Our leaders provided excellent cue sheets and maps with tips directing us to local attractions, as well as downloadable routes for those with gps devices. From Burlington with its wonderful Church Street crafts shops and spectacular bike trails with views of Lake Champlain, to Newbury, established in 1763, St. Johnsbury with its wonderful Atheneum and natural history museum and Woodstock with its trendy shops and delightful Farmers' Market on the green, Vermont offers visitors a pristine landscape of family farms and quaint villages. In Springfield, innkeepers Alex and

Alla treated our group to a dinner theatre mystery-farce experience and a fascinating telescope tour. Even though Vermont is a land-locked state, our bike routes seldom wandered far from a broad river, a babbling brook or a serene lake. Although the weather throughout the tour was rainy and cold at times, the people of Vermont were warm and welcoming and the inns we visited comfortable and clean; we shared excellent group meals at several of our inns and where the inn had no such accommodation, there were restaurants conveniently nearby.

The rides were challenging enough to satisfy even the most jaded cyclist; they were especially challenging for the four tandem couples on the ride. Several dirt roads added to the challenge but these roads were well maintained and easily negotiable if a little daunting. Drivers are courteous in Vermont and it seems that a high percentage of Vermonters are cyclists. Some of the hills were pretty formidable with 16% and even a little higher grades. A few of us were lucky to be shuttled from time to time by our fine driver, our ride leader's brother, in his leather upholstered extended cab pickup truck, truly the kind of vehicle that inspired that old western romantic ballad, "I love my truck."

There were few adverse events on our tour, most involving mechanical problems. One of our riders had to finish his fourth day ride with a saddle secured by duct tape, and early in the ride on that same day a tandem cast its derailleurs, fortunately on a slow slight grade rather than on a precipitous downhill. It was very helpful that our leaders were familiar with locations of bicycle shops in all areas of the tour. There was one fall but no serious injuries.

We enjoyed visits to the Grafton Village Cheese Company, to the VINS Raptor Center and to a cider press which was featured in "The Cider House Rules". Along the way we passed and/or traversed covered bridges.

Perhaps the highlight of the trip, aside from challenging rides and interesting scenery, was the daily happy hour during which we shared highlights of our ride in addition to nutritious snacks and personally selected beverages. We also enjoyed what our leaders, Tom and Julie, characterized as a bonding experience. We recounted background stories, hobbies, and jokes. Folks like to talk about themselves and we were all eager to hear each others' stories. We were an unusually compatible group.

The words of one of our fellow cyclists, Jeff Roberts, sum it up: "Here's to dedication, organization, elevation and precipitation!" We got plenty of all.

Participants: Cornelia Garbee, Wes Garbee, Gat Lum, Jackson McCarter, Gerald Lum, Marjorie Kirk, Tom Leever, Pamela McCarter, Julie Leever, John Leever, Jeff Roberts, Lan Roberts, Gerald Beckett, Peggy Blair, Ruth Maule, Drex Maggio, Mark Hodges

The New York Finger Lakes in the Fall September 27th to October 6th

Ride Director: Beverlee French, Report by: Jeannette Gilbert



No Whining in the Wine Region

First time co-leaders Beverlee French and Dick Jung experienced a 'trial by rain' initiation leading 18 BAC members in the Finger Lakes region across vineyards and bucolic, fall landscapes of upstate NY Sept. 27-Oct. 5th.

Our first night in Canandaigua's Inn on the Lake was a wine tasting fest and orientation of bike routes taking us 254 miles to Geneva, Skaneateles, Waterloo, Dundee, Penn Yan and back to Canandaigua. Bev and Dick distributed REI portable, foldable, reusable wine glasses which we filled each happy hour with reds, whites, and champagne.

Never mind that it rained continually the first 4 days and then some. Our fearless leaders

kept the group upbeat despite gray skies, cold, wind, and flat tires. Biking past numerous vineyards laden with sweet grapes and wineries offering free tasting did help a lot.

Sherwood Inn was the highlight destination that just didn't cooperate--it rained all day! We couldn't have been in a more comfy spot, with our cozy rooms with fireplaces facing the socked-in Lake Skaneateles

The next day, my husband had a broken cable and off he went to Geneva Bicycle Center, voted top 100 bike shops in the USA. Destination today was the Montezuma Refuge Center. Great for waterfowls. Not so much for waterlogged bikers, but lunch at Zulu's Caf  improved things considerably.

Chuck Tauck. Managing Partner of Sheldrake Wineries and BAC member hosted us with a wine tasting evening of many local wines. We planned to visit his winery, Sheldrake Point on the Cayuga Wine Trail the next day. Of course it rained all day. The 60 mile ride was reduced to 24 miles for ten of us. Dick rose to the occasion to rescue us after a gourmet lunch at the winery while others bussed over to Glenora and visited the nearby Watkins Glen Gorge.

Our rooms at the Inn at Glenora Wine Cellars perched on Seneca Lake and overlooking acres of vineyards, were home for two nights and one glorious sun-filled day. We shared the road with Mennonites on fine horse drawn carriages on their way to markets, offering a cornucopia of fall harvest worthy of a still-life.

Patches of blue appeared between threatening skies as we left Glenora. We didn't mind the seven miles of rolling hills, as we biked through picture-perfect horse farms, intricate dry walls and trees dressed in peak fall colors ahead and behind us. Soon dramatic views of Keuka Lake enhanced our ride. We were grateful for cool breezes and the calm leading to a "Norman Rockwell" city located on the shores of Lake Keuka, called Hammondsport. A long lunch at the Village Tavern was enjoyed by all followed by a wonderful biking afternoon

The next day's ride was to Penn Yan (short for Pennsylvania and Yankee). What a town! Bikers headed straight to a super ice cream shop Seneca Farms for "over the top" treats.

Leaving Penn Yan the next morning, a punishing hill of 3.8 miles with umpteen chevrons loomed ahead. Yours truly was among the many walkers, but at least 5 BACers claimed they attacked all the hills that day. Our midday reward was lunch at the Naples Hotel parlor room. No fooling, it started raining again as we finished lunch and donned rain gear again.

At our last supper, we recounted the challenges and lessons learned. The conversation turned to the genuine camaraderie that develops among BACers and the common denominator that keep us coming back. Perverse pleasure or not, we will do it again and again.

Participants: Richard Jung, Verne Gilbert, Jeannette Gilbert, Maria Martin, Glenn Martin, Sally Haas, Beverlee French, David Butler, Elaine Damme, Barbara Hailey, John Hailey, Andy Schwartz, Debbie Schwartz, Dan Peterson, Joan Peterson, Sally Mc Kinney, Jean Behse, Bill Thomson, Leona L Muller, Bruce Damme

PA's Brandywine Valley, Valley Forge, Amish Country October 10th to October 17th

Ride Director: Joan Strachota, Report by: Ida Nystrom



Even the name of this ride is picturesque -and does it ever deliver. Southeastern Pennsylvania in mid-October is an artist's dream. That's probably why so many have called the area home.

The ride begins in Chadds Ford, home of the famous Wyeth family of painters, and the Brandywine River Museum that features their work. The Dupont legacy is prevalent in this area, from the fascinating Hagley Museum centered on the company's humble origins manufacturing gunpowder, to the overwhelming Americana rooms of the grandiose Winturthur estate. Expansive Longwood Gardens, yet another Dupont property, is also nearby. The fixed base first half of the ride made it easy to explore all these attractions, either fleetingly or in depth. Each day featured several mileage choices,

making it possible to adjust your riding pace with your touristy interests.

Reluctantly leaving Chadds Ford, we stopped at Valley Forge and the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site on our way to Amish country. A lay-over day in Strasburg allowed for more riding, shopping or visiting even more attractions. Members of our group were enthralled with the Amish Village, featuring an in-depth explanation of the Amish way of life, the Railroad Museum, and especially the downtown Creamery, where we all enjoyed ice cream and goodies even on a cold, rainy day.

In order to direct us to the most scenic locations, ride leader Joan Strachota provided cue sheets of mind-boggling detail. If you're not good at following multiple directions, this is probably not the ride for you. If you are one of those who usually rides without an odometer, you might consider getting one for this trip.

This ride was a delight. The one-week length was perfect for a fall foliage diversion. There was plenty of riding for those who wanted mileage, but also lots to do for those who were just "on vacation". The area is unbelievably lovely & tidy stone houses and barns, sparkling streams winding through bucolic countryside and horse farms that made me want to take up a different kind of riding.

At the orientation meeting Joan asked each of us to name our favorite ride. Many mentioned exotic locations or epic journeys. This ride is none of these, but if Joan had asked again at the end of the week I suspect many of us would have answered "this one".

Participants: William Grogan, Cynthia Ward, Ralph Draves, Julie Taylor, Beth Caldwell, Margie Berger, Bob Fuller, Marne Deverell, Susan Grogan, David Forester, Bob Mueller, Joan Strachota, Ellie Moller, John Caldwell, Ida Nystrom, Jim Nystrom, John Dolansky, Nancy Dolansky, Bill Deverell, Ellie Moller, Bob Carson, David Patria, Barbara Underwood, Ellen Mueller, Robert Farina, Mary Loomis, Glenn Meyer, Karen Meyer

Tuscany on the Mediterranean 2009 September 2nd to September 12th

Ride Director: Syd Smoot, Report by: Lenore Carleton



Ride Report by: Lenore Carleton and Margaret Gibson

If the lure of 10 days in Italian wine country is not enough to wet your palate, add 8 glorious ride days, a well appointed headquarter hotel, 2 smooth operators serving as ride director and co-director, and in our case, 35 of your soon to be closest cycling friends! Lay down to ferment for a few days and then pour and enjoy!

Tuscany on the Med is a fantastic introduction to the BAC adventure. Our directors, Syd Smoot and Tommy Glendinning had their hands full with 36 people hungry for an Italian experience. Despite the large group, the trip was flawlessly planned and executed. Everything from facilitating bike rentals with the fantastic local company ECORENT well in

advance of our fly date, to gentle reminders to NOT pack CO2 cartridges, to shuttle directions for those flying into Pisa Airport made the usual angst about international travel a breeze.

Upon arrival we were greeted by the staff at the Bambolo Hotel in Donoratico (our home for the next 10 days). Our rooms were wonderful and the staff did a fantastic job tending to special requests and ensuring, over the coming days, that we were all well fed and topped off with caffeine at the start each day. Ahhhhh.. Cappuccino!

Our first Happy Hour (HH) on arrival day set the stage, with introductions and a overview of the rides we could expect. Each subsequent HH provided a chance to review in detail the next days ride, including options to deviate from the planned route for those interested as well as a debrief of that days ride. Dinner was provided as part of this BAC trip, at a lovely restaurant just across the street for our hotel. Menu's were provided at each HH and selections made for the subsequent evening. A great way to ensure the restaurant staff had a head start serving our large and hungry group.

Once on the bike (either shipped or rented on site) the views take your breath away. Rolling vineyards ripe with grape, hill top castles and cobblestone towns rich in European history await. True to the advertised ride ranking (2B), there was some climbing to do in order to enjoy the best views and the most spectacular fortresses but nothing ventured, nothing gained! From Bolgheri, to Montescudaio, to Campiglia and Populonia this ride will grab your heart and leave you with memories to last a lifetime (or until your return trip!).

Our final surprise was a private concert arranged by our ride directors and host hotel, the Bambolo! Just so happens their good friend, Beepe Gambetta, world renowned acoustic guitar sensation, was available to play to an intimate but packed house on Sunday evening. Who knew! Ride director AND concert promoter!

No ride can be all things to all people, but this ride came as close as it gets in this reporters opinion. Beautifully planned with great communication between riders and ride directors, fantastic routes, supportive friends (old and new!), and miles of Tuscan landscape to explore combined with the generosity and patience of our Italian hosts. That's amore!

Participants: Michelle George, Joan Ratner, Robert Van Stee, Perry Pollock, Cheryl Houston, Lewis Wexler, Alyson Hockett, Thomas Glendinning, Jackie Mastrangelo, Teressa Lippert, Scott Cross, Syd Smoot, Mike Nelson, Lenore Carleton, Robin Villa, Deb Cross, Sheri Smith, Tyler Nelson, Linda Kiel, Stephen Kiel, Leslie Ogden, Marisa Monaco, Richard McNamara, Eve Bertran, Russell George, Steve Bennett, Brad Crouch, Peter Krichman, Keith Packard, Richard Packard, John Lush, Martha Lush, Wayne Haley, Ruth Haley, Ruth Buchheit, Margaret Gibson

Armagnac, Bearn and Basque Country Regions of SW France September 12th to September 27th

Ride Director: Yvonne Bates, Report by: Grace Voss



"Our route looks like the meanderings of a confused mouse," is how one rider described a recent 14-day tour of Southwest France with BAC. Sure, the main route from Toulouse to Biarritz could be accomplished in several hours of speedy driving on one of France's fine national highways. But that is not the BAC mode of travel! Rather, this September tour made its way leisurely towards the Atlantic by traversing 530 miles of fascinating back roads, first passing countless Armagnac vineyards that produce one of the finest wines in the world. The next day featured a stop at the little-known Notre Dame des Cyclistes, a Catholic church and a homage to cycling with more than 500 bicycle club/Tour de France jerseys on display. This museum/church is located near Barbotan les Thermes, where heated baths have been soothing people's aches and pains for several

hundred years.

Day Five brought the first views of the Pyrenees Mountains, along with more severe climbs. A misty morning gave way to steady rain in the afternoon, giving joy to the parched residents of Salies de Bearn, where that evening the mayor greeted us with a reception at city hall. Salies de Bearn, a salt-producing/thermal spa area, could pass for a town in England with its half-timbered homes and large contingent of British residents.

The tour's second week featured Basque country—“incredibly green fields backed by even greener mountains, cows and sheep tinkling their bells as they grazed unseen by the bicyclists climbing up roads with intermittent forests on each side. One day a sheep dog bossed his flock across the road, causing the bicyclists a temporary wait. On the eighth day, the route traveled a 'top of the world' road for three miles. On both sides were sub-alpine views of lush meadows, well-kept farms and roadside flora. Vincent, a friend of Gilbert Jean, the trip leader, and a local bicyclist, spent his Sunday as our guide. However, not even Vincent could understand French the way Basque people speak it! All city signs have two names, French and Basque. Sometimes the French name is painted out, leaving only the Basque name!

Day Nine featured the Pyrenees at their finest—“first a 1,300 foot climb over four miles. But the second climb was a 10% grade over two miles. As sports broadcaster Dick Enberg would say, "Oh my!" These climbs were good practice for the next day, a two-hour ascent in heavy fog up to Puerto de Ibaneta (3,200 feet), followed by a thrilling descent into sunny Spain. This area is the beginning of a pilgrimage for many hikers, who walk 500 miles to visit the grave of St. James at Santiago de Compostello.

Back in France, we gradually climbed 2,700 feet along the lovely Arga River. The payoff was alpine views, then a hair-raising 13% descent over a rough road. Yikes! Highlights of the final days included a stop at the gardens/mansion of Edmond Rostand, author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The gardens were a 'mini Versailles' in their formality. The Basque-style home was grand. The stop was well worth one's time.

The Atlantic came into view finally, along with noisy, congested traffic swirling around Biarritz, France's other Cote d'Azur. A fine beach, lots of tourists and a lively outdoor market were part of the attraction of this wealthy resort.

Throughout France the food was wonderful, with dinners featuring fish and /or duck, fine cheeses and wines, creative desserts and excellent soups. The weather was mostly sunny, with a hint of fall in the air, the leadership well organized and our fellow travelers friendly. While our route sheets weren't always crystal clear, we always found our hotel at the end of each day. I give this trip a 9+ on a scale of 1 to 10!

Participants: Betty Hoffman, Tina Neil, Jane Holahan, Sally Salmon, Lois Williams, Gilbert Jean, Yvonne Bates, George Chambers, Fran Kaplan, Frank MacFadden, Grace Voss, Nikola Ciganovich, Elizabeth Ciganovich, Kathleen Learned, Mary Newman, Lyn Rawlinson, Ron Wagner, Randy Miller, Carol Mickelsen, Marion Shaw, Fred Shaw, Robert Deering, Gerald Anderson

South Africa Cape Town and beyond September 29th to October 20th

Ride Coordinator: Harold Ashby, Report by: Victoria Lowell



South Africa Fall 2009

We had stopped in the charming village of Suurbraak for coffee, banana bread and a recounting of its history as a settlement founded by the London Missionary Society in 1812. From the adjacent room we heard singing; eight grandmotherly women were holding choir practice. Asked if they would sing for us, they responded with a heartfelt rendition of the gospel hymn "I have everything I need to make me happy." There is no better way to describe our enjoyment of the South Africa trip.

Cheryl and David Griffiths of Outeniqua Adventure Tours gave us everything we needed to make us happy - from their friendship, to an itinerary which took us through a wonderful variety of scenic

landscapes and accommodations as we zigged from the coast over the mountains and back again, to van support on the few occasions when blustering winds made cycling less than happy, to cheerful answers to our myriad questions about things both seen and unseen.

South Africa is a large country. Our itinerary took us between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, never straying more than about fifty miles from the spectacularly scenic coastline. Roughly paralleling the coast are the Outeniqua and Tsitsikamma mountain ranges with the Swartberg range further inland; each of the intervening valleys has a special character. First we were in wine country; the next pass led us to fruit orchards; then we were riding by rolling fields of wheat and sheep and cattle; The Way of the Women Pass took us into the Little Karoo, a semi-desert with hot springs and ostrich farms. Moving east onto the Garden Route, tree plantations and patches of indigenous forest predominated.

We kept returning to the coast: watching breaching southern right whales from the cliffs of Hermanus; astride the intersection of the Indian and Atlantic oceans at Cape Agulhas; cruising the lagoon at Knysna; strolling the magnificent beach at Nature's Valley; watching the super tubes roll in at Jeffrey's Bay

The roads were less varied than the landscapes. We rode mostly on two lane roads with differing degrees of chip seal paving and usually light traffic. At times, there was no option but the N2 a national highway, which featured a wide shoulder, but a continuing stream of cars and trucks rumbling by. No one had trouble adapting to cycling on the left.

Two questions about South Africa generally come up. What about security? Did you see the animals? Regarding the first, it is discomfoting to see the poverty most evident in the informal (shanty) housing, but almost universally we were greeted with smiles, hellos and even shouts of "hou bene hou" (last legs last) as we rode by. The people we directly encountered were courteous and helpful. Leading an early to bed existence, none of us tested safety at night.

As for the animals, we left the bikes behind and spent our last two days at the 10,000 hectare Lalibela Game Reserve successfully seeking out the lions, elephants, rhinos, giraffes, herds of antelope etc. on our early morning and late afternoon drives. You wouldn't think that it would be hard to find the elephant herd, but they "hide" in the bush, and it took us two tries. Seeing the blesbuck and zebras silhouetted on a ridge against the evening sky was breathtaking.

In addition to all the above there were the African penguins at Boulders Beach, the views from Table Mountain, the springtime profusion of flowers in the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and along the roadsides, good food and fine wine, and us, a most cheerful group of 14 cyclists. Who could not be totally happy and satisfied?

Participants: John Kerr, Christine Kerr, Harold Ashby, Cynthia Lyons, Thomas Ryan, Robert Warfield, Joan Roe, Larry Roe, Sandra Robinson, Victoria Lowell, Pete Lowell, Judy Ashby, Elaine Gustavson, Gary Gustavson